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ABSTRACT

After presenting evidence that there is a wide gap between teaching a language and translating a language, reasons for proposing a program in Russian translation are offered. The proposed program for Iowa State University will be selective in admission of undergraduate Russian majors. The program will lead to a certificate in conjunction with the bachelor's degree in Russian. Instruction will involve supervised and guided independent study on an individual basis. The student will be required to produce real translations for a real local consumer. Fifteen quarter credits over the courses normally required for the Russian major will be involved. (SW)

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Curriculum and Pedagogical Parameters in Developing a Program in Russian Translation

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I must tell you first, that although I am a member of the American Translator's Association, and a recent member at that, I consider myself a Russian teacher first and a translator second. I am also a chairman of a Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, which offers Russian and seven other languages. I am a product of a traditional, formal education. So much for my biases.

I had always sensed that no matter what language department I called home, it was perceived in a very strange way by my colleagues in other departments on campus, and in other colleges at the university. They seemed convinced that we taught chatter and babble by the dribble method like some slow motion Berlitz. While I admit there was some truth in this idea, I was always eager to emphasize the centrality of foreign language study to a fine liberal arts education with an emphasis on literature and culture.

However, ONE GREAT MYTH escaped my attention, and I am surprised that it took me so long to catch it out. Colleagues in other fields

assume that, in addition to teaching babble and chatter, we also DO TRANSLATIONS. Let me put the record straight once and for all: Language teachers teach language and literature, and are not necessarily any good at translating or teaching others to translate. Translators do translations, but they are not necessarily any good at teaching languages and literatures. Putting it very briefly: Teachers are not translators, and translators are not teachers. This very wide gap between teaching a language and translating a language is remarkably clear once you look at the evidence.

Item: The ACTFL Annual Bibliography of Books and Articles on Pedagogy in Foreign Languages for the Years 1975 and 1976 lists one (1) book and five (5) articles on translation, while at the same time it lists four thousand one hundred ninety seven (4197) books and articles not on translating for the two year period.[1] Less than two tenths of one percent (0.2%) of the pedagogical literature in the field of foreign languages is dedicated to translating.

Item: The MLA International Bibliography 1976, and the MLA International Bibliography 1977 add no further items in the field of translating. The MLA bibliographies don't even have a classification for translating.[2,3]

Item: The ADFL Bulletin of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages has published about a dozen articles in each quarterly issue for the last nine years. Since 1973, only one (1) article in two hundred forty (240) was devoted to translating, or, about four tenths of one

percent (0.4%).[4] Again, you can see what absolutely minimal attention is given to translating by a journal that is otherwise very sensitive to the professional concerns and worries of the field it serves.

Item: While the Modern Language Association of America lists over twenty eight thousand four hundred (28,400) members in its September 1978 Directory issue, and the Membership List of the American Translator's Association has one thousand ninety eight (1098) United States members, ONLY 71 OF THE A.T.A. MEMBERS ARE ALSO MEMBERS OF THE M.L.A.[5,6] The memberships are congruent by only one quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the membership of the larger body.

Item: The American Translators' Association lists only twenty-eight (28) members as accredited translators of Russian into English.[7] Of these twenty-eight (28) accredited Russian translators, only two (2) are members of the M.L.A. and three (3) others are listed as members of A.A.T.S.E.E.L. None are members of both M.L.A. and A.A.T.S.E.E.L. As a matter of fact, I was able to find only one (1) person who had membership in all three, M.L.A., A.T.A. and A.A.T.S.E.E.L., and she was not listed as accredited in Russian.

Item: A page 3 article by Malcolm G. Scully in the November 6, 1978 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education describing the first fruit of the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies, takes up the entire page without the words "translating" or "translation" appearing even once.[8]

Item: Of the twenty-four (24) members of the President's Commission, not one is a member of the American Translators' Association, and only two (2) of the two dozen (24) members are members of the M.L.A.[9]

Item: Of the five (5) members, two (2) advisors, two (2) consultants and three (3) staff members of the Modern Language Association's Task Force on the Commonly Taught Languages, not a single one is a member of the American Translators' Association.[10]

Item: In the Report of the Task Force on the Commonly Taught Languages, which runs six and a half pages, no mention is made of translating or translation.[11]

Item: Of the five (5) members, two (2) advisors, one (1) consultant and three (3) staff members on the Modern Language Association's Task Force on the Less Commonly Taught Languages, not one is listed as a member of the American Translators' Association.[12]

Item: In the Report of the Task Force on the Less Commonly Taught Languages, no mention of translating or translation is made in five pages.[13]

Item: Of the five (5) members, two (2) advisors and three (3) staff members of the Modern Language Association's Task Force on Institutional Language Policy, not one is listed as a member of the American Translators' Association.[14]

Item: In the Report of the Task Force on Institutional Language Policy no mention of translating or translation appears anywhere in the eleven pages of text, nor is anyone of the fifty two (52) recommendations related to translation or translators.[15]

Thats the last item.

While Foreign Languages and Area training has quite clearly become a NATIONAL ISSUE and while the work of the various task forces, and commissions and the resulting reports and resolutions have been very thorough, positive and realistic, it is equally clear that translating and translators have been totally omitted from the whole process. My personal feeling is that any omission of specific consideration of translating, and the complete absence of professional translators in the membership of the various task forces and committees was entirely accidental and benign. The ONE GREAT MYTH explains it all: "Of course translating and translators are represented, because language teachers do translations."

It seems to me, that the American Translator's Association might quite properly and in a very timely way comment publicly on the various resolutions and reports at this time.

I hope I have demonstrated to you quite conclusively that language teachers are not translators and translators are not language teachers. The two groups of professionals scarcely ever seem to impinge on one another. The two areas of professional interest are nearly mutually exclusive any way you look at them.

If translators and language teachers never get together, if the gap between the two fields is so wide, then why propose a program in Russian Translation? Its very simple. I think I am a good Russian

teacher, and I enjoy teaching Russian. I think I am a good translator, and I enjoy translating. I would like to share these things which I can do well, and which I enjoy with even a very few students. And, in addition, in spite of how black a picture I have just painted for translating as reflected in our professional journals, associations, commissions and task forces, I know there is a growing need for translating Russian that is crucial to the welfare of our country and our way of life.

Let me read one paragraph from the National Security Agency's 1978 Professional Qualification Test booklet - page 5 - What are the Career Fields?

> "Language (modern foreign language majors and minors)
>
> "People who are proficient in esoteric foreign languages, especially languages in the Slavic, Asian, and Near Eastern groups, may apply their education immediately on transcription, translation, or analytic reporting projects...
>
> "Those who have command of a more common language such as French, Spanish or German may be retrained in our intensive Russian language course."[16]

The program I will describe to you does not yet exist, but is proposed for Iowa State University of Science and Technology. We hope to begin next Fall. The program will be very limited in size and will admit only the very best undergraduates majoring in Russian. Leading

to a certificate in conjunction with the bachelor's degree in Russian, the program will be modelled very closely on the "Guidelines" described in Royal L. Tinsley's 1973 article which appeared in the May issue of the ADFL Bulletin.[17]

As proposed now, this certificate program will consist of one two-credit course each quarter in the junior year, and one three-credit course each quarter in the senior year, or fifteen quarter credits over and above the courses normally required for the Russian major.

Instruction will take the form of closely supervised and guided independent study on an individual basis, with each student undertaking real translations of increasing difficulty for one of the two major international research institutes on the Ames campus. These are the World Food Institute and the Ames Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy. The World Food Institute has agreed to help us identify the Russian materials that are needed most urgently in English translaion, and the Ames Laboratory of the U. S. Department of Energy has agreed to help us select materials for translation that would be most immediate value to their own staff.

By making the program not a series of lectures in class, but individual apprenticeships in translating, supervised by a qualified tutor on a one-to-one basis, and by requiring the student to produce real translations for a real local consumer, we hope to provide the atmosphere of reward and challenge that will allow each student to get on with the

development and perfecting of his own translating skills as effectively and rapidly as possible.

By keeping the program very small and tutorial in nature, we hope to make it maximally effective for the few students who qualify for it. There is certainly a great need for one more very small, but very fine translating program in Russian.

N O T E S

1. David P. Benseler, ACTFL Annual Bibliography of Books and Articles on Pedagogy in Foreign Languages for the Years 1975 and 1976, ACTFL, New York, 1978, pp. xxvi + 320.
2. 1976 MLA International Bibliography, Vol. II, New York, 1978, pp. xxxvi + 386.
3. 1977 MLA International Bibliography, Vol. II, New York, 1978, pp. xliii + 386.
4. ADFL Bulletin, New York, 1969 - 1978.
5. PMLA, Vol. 93, No. 4, September 1978, Directory, pp. 548-856.
6. Membership List of the American Translators' Association, Croton-on-Hudson, May, 1978, pp. v + 69.
7. Ibid.
8. Malcolm G. Scully, "Push Early Study of Foreign Languages, Panel is Urged," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Nov. 6, 1978, p. 3.
9. Ibid.
10. "Report of the Task Force on the Commonly Taught Languages," ADFL Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 1, September 1978, p. 1
11. Ibid. pp. 1-7.
12. "Report of the Task Force on the Less Commonly Taught Languages," ADFL Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 1, September 1978, p. 7.
13. Ibid. pp. 7-11.
14. "Report of the Task Force on Institutional Language Policy," ADFL Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 2, November 1978, p. 1.
15. Ibid. pp. 1-11.

16. 1978 Professional Qualification Test booklet, National Security Agency, pp. 16.

17. Royal L. Tinsley, Jr., "Guidelines for College and University Programs in Translator Training," ADFL Bulletin, Vol. 4, No. 4, (May 1973), pp. 15-18.